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MARY McGRORY:

Literary fever throws dirty tricks back at CIA

Scratch a spy and find a scribe.

That's the experience of CIA Director Stansfield Turner, who is presiding unhappily over a literary renaissance at Langley that promises to compare, in quantity anyway, with the Flowering of New England, the Celtic Revival and the more recent Watergate overflow.

Turner fired 800 spooks who were, he says, "clogging the system." But if he unclogged one system, he is clogging others, surely the publishing houses and, possibly, the courts.

The outpouring may drive him to institute second-skill training in Langley. Because when you think about it, what is a retired spy to do, now that there is no CREEP to give him gainful employment a la Howard Hunt?

The peaceful uses of someone trained in shellfish poisoning or subway contamination are somewhat limited. What is a man who has been writing in invisible ink all his life to do except write his memoirs?

The way things are going, soon every agent will have his literary agent. The Justice Department is doing its best to stem the flow. It is suing Frank Snepp, who used to interrogate Vietnamese in ice-cold rooms, for writing a book called *Decent Interval* — without clearing the manuscript with headquarters, as promised in the contract he signed when he became an agent.

Snepp claims that he revealed no classified information, and the Justice Department has not said that he did. It's just that the Carter administration, like its predecessors, wishes to scare spies away from typewriters.

Hard on Snepp's heels has come John Stockwell, a 12-year veteran of the Company. He has written about our overt operations in Angola. The

name of his book is *In Search of Enemies*, and it makes *Decent Interval* look like *Winnie the Pooh*.

Stockwell, a tough, blunt, mustachioed Judo expert, didn't get permission to publish his book. And his is not your "modified, limited hangout." He has revealed classified information, and he's proud of it. He stood up on *Sixty Minutes* — Mike Wallace is becoming the No. 1 debriefer in the country — and just about called out to the authorities "Come and get me."

The Justice Department almost has to haul him into court.

The one author on the scene the CIA approves is William E. Colby. He's a good boy. He got permission to publish *Honorable Men*. The former director's story is that he was a martyr to truth. Had he followed instructions to lie to the Rockefeller Commission, he would not have been sicked by Gerald Ford.

He defends Vietnam, the Phoenix program, the Glomar Explorer and numerous other follies. He defends himself and the agency.

But if he has a halo, he also seems to have Stockwell's knife in his back. A victim of his own candor? Not so, says Stockwell, who presided over our misadventures in Angola.

Colby tells us in *Honorable Men* that he was lonely and isolated as he trudged about Capitol Hill telling, as oath and conscience required, the dirty little secrets of the agency he served for 30 years. On page 423, he describes the new burdens put on him by a greedy Congress: "I was going up there to report on every new step taken in the Angola, Kurdish and other covert operations currently underway. . . ."

"Sadly," he sighs, "Every new project subjected to this procedure during 1975 leaked, and the covert

part of CIA's covert action seemed almost gone."

Sadly, Stockwell reports on page 229 of *In Search of Enemies*, Colby was lying to these committees.

Colby methodically continued his briefings throughout the program — 35 briefings altogether between January 1975 and January 1976. Systematically, he misled congressmen about what we were doing in Angola.

Stockwell has had a sneak preview of Colby's book, and he reviews it in a searing footnote: "In *Honorable Men*, Colby claims that he worked with determination to make the CIA 'an integral part of our democratic system of checks and balances. . . . And yet while he was answering their questions about past CIA operations, he was feeding them patently false information about the ongoing Angolan operation. . . ."

Colby now gets his turn on *Sixty Minutes*, and an opportunity to re-drape his slightly mussed toga.

There is light at the end of the tunnel for the reading public. The ex-agents may put us all in bifocals by the time we've finished perusing their confessions and contradictions.

But here is the bright side. We've got the inside dope on the fall of Saigon and our "non-intervention" in Angola. The way things are going, we can look forward to the lowdown on Greece, Chile, the Kurdish Republic, the secret war in Laos, and possibly even "Operation Chaos." We may get the full history of covert operations from those who conducted them. And when it all comes out, the CIA will have to stop covert operations, realizing that among the cloaks and daggers there will be a pen, busily scratching notes for the book which we now know every agent has in him.